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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 28 October 2010, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Soomro (Vice-Chair) ..... (Pakistan)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Ms. McLurg

Contents

Agenda item 134: Human resources management

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In the absence of Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala), Mr. Soomro (Pakistan), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 134: Human resources management (A/65/180, A/65/202, A/65/213, A/65/305 and Add.1-4, A/65/332, A/65/343, A/65/345 and Add.1, A/65/350 and Add.1, and A/65/537)

1. **Ms. Migiro** (Deputy Secretary-General) said that management reform was a central part of the Secretary-General's vision for the United Nations. Efficient, responsive and effective management was of vital importance as the Organization sought to keep pace with the demands of its increasingly complex field operations. With staff costs accounting for 70 per cent of the regular budget and nearly a quarter of the peacekeeping budget, human resources management policies were essential to the functioning of the Organization.

2. Human resources management must support a culture of empowerment and performance that afforded all staff members opportunities to learn and grow. The United Nations had changed from an organization that focused primarily on conference-servicing to one that operated in rapidly changing field environments. That change in focus had brought with it many challenges. Vacancy rates and turnover were high in certain duty stations, particularly those designated as non-family duty stations. Unfortunately, staff members assigned to those duty stations were the most disadvantaged by the compensation package the Organization offered.

3. The problem of recruiting and retaining qualified staff was not confined to the field. In 2008, it had taken an average of 182 days from the time a non-field vacancy had been posted to the time a candidate had been selected. That same process had taken 197 days in 2009. The Secretariat and Member States must work together to speed up the recruitment and hiring process.

4. In order to serve and deliver as one, the United Nations must achieve policy integration and interoperability. Integration meant that policies applied across the Organization, procedures were followed consistently and modern management tools were accessible to all. Interoperability meant that common system organizations were able to coordinate and cooperate in order to achieve common goals.

5. Harmonizing contractual arrangements was the first step towards operating more effectively in the field. Although the General Assembly had committed to a system that included continuing contracts, it had yet to agree on the modalities for their implementation. Inequities in the conditions of service, particularly at non-family duty stations, hampered the Organization's ability to recruit and retain staff for the toughest missions. Although the proposals of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) for harmonizing conditions of service did not correspond to what the Secretary-General had initially requested, they were a fair and justifiable basis for compensating staff who served at non-family duty stations.

6. The Secretary-General had already conveyed his views on the important work done by the Commission and expressed his strong support for harmonizing the work of the common system. However, he was aware that, as with any reform process, there was uncertainty and genuine concern regarding the implementation of the new policy, in particular its potential impact on the critical operations of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. She trusted that the Committee's consideration of the matter, as well any recommendations it made, would afford the United Nations the opportunity to examine and address any potentially detrimental aspects.

7. Another important reform initiative was the proposed United Nations young professionals programme, which was a response to the General Assembly's request to address problems with the national competitive recruitment examination.

8. **Ms. Kane** (Under-Secretary-General for Management), introducing the various reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management, said that the Secretary-General had submitted an overview of human resources management reform with four addenda (A/63/305 and Add.1-4). The overview report addressed the entire range of human resources management reforms, including contracts and conditions of service; talent management and the talent management tool, Inspira; the national competitive recruitment examination; the human resources management scorecard; and staff-management relations. It also included a recommendation to reduce the time vacancies were advertised from 60 days to 45 days.

9. Addendum 1 on contractual arrangements and harmonization of conditions of service provided

additional information concerning the implementation of continuing appointments, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 63/250. It also set out reforms to the conditions of service in the field proposed by ICSC, particularly with regard to compensation in non-family duty stations. The Secretariat was alone among United Nations bodies in not compensating staff for the additional costs and hardship associated with assignment to such duty stations. The General Assembly was asked to endorse the recommendation of the Commission, as set out in its report (A/65/30).

10. Addendum 2 was the Secretary-General's comprehensive assessment of the system of geographical distribution and assessment of the issues relating to possible changes in the number of posts subject to that system. The addendum, which was submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 63/250, set out several models for the Committee's consideration.

11. Addendum 3 provided information on the implementation of the new talent management tool, Inspira.

12. Addendum 4 on the young professionals programme was submitted in response to the General Assembly's request for a feasibility study on the potential for broadening the scope of the national competitive recruitment examination. The report set out a number of proposals which the Secretariat believed would enhance the system for both candidates and the Organization.

13. The report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics (A/65/350) presented a demographic analysis of the composition of the staff of the Secretariat from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010.

14. The report on the practice of the Secretary-General in disciplinary matters and possible criminal behaviour during the period from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010 (A/65/180), provided an update on all actions taken in cases of established misconduct and/or criminal behaviour and the disciplinary action and, where appropriate, legal action, taken in accordance with the established procedures and regulations. It also provided an overview of the administrative machinery in disciplinary matters, a summary of the cases for which one or more disciplinary measures had been imposed by the Secretary-General during the reporting period and the disposition of cases that had been completed during the reporting period.

15. The Committee also had before it the Secretary-General's report on measures taken to address systemic human resources issues raised by the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services (A/65/332), in particular the areas of career progression and development, as well as leadership and managerial effectiveness.

16. Lastly, there was the report on the provisional Staff Rules (A/65/202) and the report on amendments to the Staff Regulations (A/65/213), in which the Secretary-General responded to Member States' request to provide a broader definition of "conflict of interest".

17. **Ms. Dubinsky** (Director, Ethics Office), introducing the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the Ethics Office (A/65/343), said that the Office must improve its outreach to staff if it was to contribute to strengthening the Organization's culture of accountability and integrity, and have a positive impact on its ethical and reputational risk profile. To that end, the Office would soon publish a handbook informing staff of how they could obtain advice or lodge complaints. It was easier to prevent an ethical problem than to resolve it ex post facto.

18. The Office continued to make progress in supporting system-wide collaboration and coherence in the application of ethical standards. In that connection, she noted the ongoing collaboration among the Ethics Offices of the Secretariat and seven funds and programmes that participated in the United Nations Ethics Committee. During the reporting period, the Ethics Committee had discussed in detail member organizations' policies on protection against retaliation and financial disclosure. System-wide collaboration had been enhanced with the convening in June 2010 of the first session of the United Nations Ethics Network. The Network, which included entities from the entire United Nations system, would serve as a voluntary forum for establishing ethical standards and promoting coherence in ethics and integrity throughout the system.

19. In 2010, a consulting firm had conducted an independent analysis of the United Nations financial disclosure programme and assessed the feasibility of various options for managing the programme. Following the completion of the study, the Secretary-

General had established a high-level advisory group to review the financial disclosure programme and develop recommendations concerning the programme's future. Both the external study and the high-level advisory group had helped to provide an in-depth understanding of the functioning of the current programme.

20. Before deciding on the programme's future, the group would have to decide whether the current programme adequately addressed the Organization's risk profile with regard to conflicts of interest, whether the programme's governance and regulatory frameworks were adequate and whether the process and technical design allowed the programme to operate with maximum effectiveness and efficiency. The Office would update the Committee on progress made and present its recommendations through formal channels. Implementation of the improved financial disclosure system should not entail any change in resource allocation.

21. The Ethics Office was concerned that the lacuna in the Organization's policy on protection against retaliation allowed the Investigations Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to decline to investigate a prima facie case of retaliation referred to it by the Office. The Office already had an alternative investigative mechanism at its disposal, as set out in the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2005/21, should OIOS decline to investigate a matter owing to conflict of interest. However, should OIOS decline to investigate a prima facie case of retaliation for any other reason, the Organization must afford staff members access to alternative mechanisms.

22. She called on the General Assembly to recognize that the Ethics Office must be able to preserve and maintain the absolute confidentiality of all information relating to the performance of its mandate. That request was being made in direct response to one of the unforeseen consequences of the new internal justice system.

23. **Ms. McLurg** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/65/537), said that the Advisory Committee was disappointed that the Secretary-General's proposals on continuing appointment no longer included the criterion of continuing need for a post. Given that he had also concluded that long-term workforce planning had limited added value for the Secretariat, the Advisory Committee was concerned that the Secretary-General would find it difficult to determine the optimum number of continuing appointments while maintaining sufficient flexibility to adapt to changing requirements. In the absence of the criterion of continuing need, the approach outlined by the Secretary-General was equivalent to awarding continuing appointments to all staff over time. The increase in the number of staff who could have a long-term lien on the Organization would increase its potential financial liability.

24. The Advisory Committee further noted that awarding continuing appointments to locally recruited staff in peacekeeping operations and special political missions, which were, by definition, temporary in nature, contradicted the principle underlying the introduction of continuing appointments.

25. The Advisory Committee was not convinced by the Secretary-General's arguments regarding the ease with which continuing appointments could be terminated, particularly in cases of significant downsizing or changing requirements. The Advisory Committee was concerned that, unless the criteria and procedures for termination were clear, some staff, upon termination, would inevitably resort to the internal justice system, which could also have financial implications for the Organization.

26. With regard to the harmonization of conditions of service for staff serving in non-family duty stations, the Advisory Committee believed that the ICSC recommendations endorsed by the Secretary-General had merit and recommended their approval. Those recommendations would enhance programme delivery by facilitating staffing in non-family duty stations and would also address existing disparities in the various entities' remuneration packages. Approval would therefore increase fairness by treating staff who were serving in the same duty station, under similar conditions, in the same way across the common system. It would also facilitate greater inter-agency mobility.

27. Although the special operations approach developed by a number of agencies, funds and programmes responded to specific circumstances, it had never been connected to overall compensation arrangements or approved by the General Assembly. Approval of the recommendations would therefore strengthen the effectiveness of the common system by

reasserting the authority of ICSC for making recommendations on the full spectrum of compensation arrangements and enhancing transparency and accountability, and, by extension, also maintaining those issues within the purview of the General Assembly.

28. The Advisory Committee emphasized the importance of cooperation and compliance by all participants in the common system regarding decisions the General Assembly might take on those matters. Accordingly, during the five-year transitional period recommended by ICSC, the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the funds and programmes should work closely together, within the framework of the common system, to address and mitigate any unintended consequences of the new arrangements by bringing them to the attention of the General Assembly through the Commission.

29. With regard to the Secretary-General's proposal to modify the national competitive examination and rename it the young professionals programme, the Advisory Committee welcomed the proposals for more effective recruitment, placement and career development of young professionals from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States. Although it supported the programme, the Advisory Committee did not favour lowering the age limit for applicants from 32 to 26. Nor did the Committee support the proposal that the roster should remain valid for only one year.

30. The Advisory Committee agreed with the proposal to use 15 per cent of vacant extrabudgetary and peacekeeping support account posts at the P-1 and P-2 levels for recruitment for the young professionals programme, on the understanding that all remaining extrabudgetary and peacekeeping support account posts would be advertised. The Advisory Committee did not support the proposal that successful G to P candidates should be required to relocate to another duty station on their initial assignment. Those individuals should be subject to the same mobility policy that applied to all other staff.

31. The Advisory Committee recommended that a complete assessment of the functioning of the young professionals programme, including a re-examination of the age limit in light of experience gained, should be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. In view of the potential career development benefits for young professionals, the possibility of broadening the scope of the programme beyond countries that were unrepresented and underrepresented, or were likely to become so, and to open it up to the full membership of the United Nations, could also be explored.

32. Lastly, the Advisory Committee supported the Secretary-General's request that the Assembly approve a reduction in the period for circulation of specific job openings from 60 to 45 days as a means of speeding up the recruitment and staffing process.

33. **The Chair** drew attention to the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on ethics in the United Nations system (A/64/345) and the comments of the Secretary-General and of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) (A/65/345/Add.1). In addition, an introductory statement by the Senior Advisor on Information Management Policy Coordination of the CEB Secretariat and an introductory statement by the authors of JIU report (JIU/REP/2010/3), had been made available to delegations.

34. **Ms. Analena** (Vice-President of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee) said the single most important human resources issue facing the Organization was continuing appointments. Although much progress had been made in reforming human resources management, the new system still lacked a proper foundation in the form of a sound contractual framework. Such a framework was of vital importance to staff members because it would fundamentally define their working conditions. Staff expected the United Nations to uphold human rights, including labour rights, and the principle of equal pay and conditions for equal work.

35. At the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly, the Staff-Management Coordination Committee had presented the results of an independent study which indicated that, in all of the Member States surveyed, open-ended appointments were the norm for civil servants and were offered at an earlier stage than that envisaged for United Nations staff. The Staff-Management Coordination Committee therefore called on the Organization to adhere to international norms by granting its staff open-ended appointments.

36. Some Member States were concerned that, in the absence of a strategic workforce plan, it would be difficult for the Secretary-General to establish the

concept of continuing need. Nonetheless, the Staff-Management Coordination Committee agreed with the Secretary-General that it was almost impossible to develop a workforce plan in view of the Organization's constantly evolving mandates. Disqualifying staff members employed by entities with a finite mandate from eligibility for continuing appointments would penalise individuals who might spend their entire careers with such an entity. Such a policy was short-sighted and self-defeating.

37. With regard to the performance management system, the Staff-Management Coordination Committee agreed that managers should review and document staff members' performance and that a recommendation to award a continuing appointment would, in turn, be reviewed by a joint review body. Staff believed that managers should be held accountable for their recommendations and proposed that the accountability of managers should be included in the Secretary-General's administrative instructions when the contractual framework was fully implemented.

38. Although staff appreciated Member States' concern about performance, no evidence, empirical or otherwise, had been presented on the number of staff members who were not performing adequately. The vast majority of United Nations staff members were hard-working, competent and effective. The General Assembly should not judge the entire staff on the basis of a few underperforming individuals or speculation.

39. With regard to the financial liability of termination indemnities, she noted that, in addition to open-ended appointments, a termination indemnity had been part of the remuneration and benefits package since the establishment of the United Nations. Apart from the termination indemnity, staff members had no protection against unemployment and no access to a social security system, in contravention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Staff were therefore pleased to note ICSC had found that there had been little or no abuse of the indemnity system and the financial liability had been minimal. The Commission's findings clearly indicated that the termination indemnity system was working under the current contractual arrangement. Staff saw no reason why the system should not continue to work with the implementation of continuing contracts.

40. **Mr. Kisambira** (President of the United Nations Staff Union) said that, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 34/220 and 35/213, the Secretary-General had in the past presented the unfettered views of Secretariat staff in an addendum to the report of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee. In 2010, staff representatives who had attended the thirty-first session of the Coordination Committee had observed that the report on the session did not fully present their views. The Secretary-General had therefore decided not to submit the report to the Assembly, thereby precluding presentation of the views of Secretariat staff. Copies of the report on those views were available in the conference room.

41. Conflicts between staff and the Administration regarding human resources management had become so intractable that none of the parties could be objective enough to make meaningful change. The staff therefore urged the Assembly to consider establishing an independent panel of experts to review and redesign human resources management in the Secretariat.

42. On the administration of justice at the United Nations, it was perturbing that the Secretary-General, in his report (A/65/373 and Corr.1), was challenging the dispute and appeals tribunals by requesting the Assembly to limit scope of their jurisdiction, intervene in their rules of procedure and amend their statutes to uphold his refusal to comply with the tribunals' orders. Details of the staff position were set out in the annex to the report on Secretariat staff views. Issues that required the Assembly's attention included the lack of an independent oversight body for the new system of administration of justice; the lack of equality of arms for the staff; the quasi-independence of the Office of Administration of Justice; the tribunals' lack of independent investigative capacity and authority to compel the appearance of witnesses and the production of documents and to discourage perjury and contempt for the rule of law; and the inability of the Dispute Tribunal to suspend the implementation of a contested administrative decision regarding appointment, promotion or termination. The tribunals should have the same authority as national courts.

43. When the Secretary-General had presented his proposals on a new contractual arrangement, he had indicated that he would discontinue permanent appointments as of 1 July 2009. The principle of permanent appointments was contained in Article 101 of the Charter; any such discontinuation would therefore require an amendment to the Charter. The permanent appointment was fundamental to the

integrity, loyalty and independence of the international civil service. Consideration of staff members for conversion to a permanent appointment should continue until a determination was made on a new contractual arrangement.

44. The recent administrative instruction on the performance management and development system (ST/AI/2010/5) placed a greater burden on supervisees than on supervisors and lacked clarity regarding accountability or an equitable integrated accountability framework. The system's stated purpose was to improve programme delivery by optimizing performance at all levels through better communication between staff and supervisors on the goals and key results to be achieved. The system was expected to promote continuous learning, recognize successful performance and address performance shortcomings, but there were no mechanisms for achieving those aims. Staff were of the view that each department should establish an autonomous performance management panel to assess the performance of supervisors and supervisees against prescribed criteria.

45. Administrative assistants were critical to the proper functioning of the staff representative bodies, most notably by providing institutional memory for staff representatives who were elected for limited terms. The Staff Union in New York currently had just one post of staff assistant at the G-4 level that was funded by the redeployment of resources from elsewhere in the Department of Management. The General Assembly should consider reinstating the previous staffing level of one administrative assistant at the G-6 level and one staff assistant at the G-5 level for the New York office and adequate staffing levels for other staff representative bodies.

46. **Mr. Al-Shahari** (Yemen), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the effective delivery of United Nations mandates hinged on the quality of its staff and the availability of resources. The Group welcomed all measures aimed at establishing a highly motivated, vibrant and dynamic workforce for the Organization. While the Group supported the Secretary-General's intention to focus on shorter-term operational workforce planning to address the demands identified in field operations, it was of the view that long-term planning was equally important and concurred with the Advisory Committee that the unpredictability of mandates should not prevent the Secretary-General from extrapolating future staffing needs on the basis of experience and trends.

47. The Group did not support the proposed reduction in the period of advertising individual vacancies: other aspects of the recruitment process should be streamlined to reduce the number of days required to fill vacancies. Any subsequent proposal should address the issue in a comprehensive manner.

48. All candidates should be assessed on the basis of the requirements of the post. The recruitment process must comply with the Charter, General Assembly priorities and resolutions, and the Staff Regulations and Rules, taking into account the highest standards of competence and integrity and giving due regard to the principles of geographical diversity and gender parity. The Group was therefore deeply concerned by the use of discriminatory procedures for the selection of external candidates and urged the Secretary-General to withdraw the related administrative instruction (ST/AI/2010/3).

49. The problems with the Inspira system were a cause of concern and must be resolved as a matter of urgency, given that Inspira was intended to be the centrepiece of the Secretariat's recruitment and talent management system.

50. The Group would seek further clarification on the scope, implications and rationale of the proposed young professionals programme and the Secretary-General's intention to implement measures for the more effective recruitment, placement and professional development of young professionals.

51. The Secretary-General's report on the system of geographical distribution (A/65/305/Add.2) did not adequately respond to the Assembly's request for a comprehensive review of the system of desirable ranges. Three thousand three hundred posts, representing only 7.5 per cent of the 44,000 Secretariat staff, were currently under that system. The Group reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to achieve equitable geographical distribution and gender balance. Moreover, the Secretary-General should work closely with major troop-contributing countries to fill vacancies in field missions and should make appropriate provision for the proper representation of those countries in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support.

52. It was unacceptable, after the adoption of the new contractual arrangements, to have the granting of continuing contracts frozen because Member States had failed to agree on the modalities for implementing those contracts. If no agreement was reached, the option of returning to the old contractual arrangements should be explored.

53. The Group supported the recommendations of ICSC on the harmonization of conditions of service in non-family duty stations. Member States must end the discriminatory treatment of staff serving in the field, who faced the same challenges as their counterparts in the agencies, funds and programmes, and should receive the same treatment. The Group expected that the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of CEB, would ensure the system-wide application of new arrangements approved by the Assembly at its current session. It was also important for organizations in the common system to implement paragraph 45 of General Assembly resolution 64/289 on system-wide coherence.

54. **Mr. Grauls** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia and Iceland; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the human resources management reform process should be results-based so that measures could be evaluated during and after their implementation. It was therefore regrettable that the Secretary-General's reports contained no element that would allow Member States to assess the results of previous reforms. Reform proposals must also be measured in terms of their budgetary feasibility. The European Union would scrutinize each proposal on its merits, balancing the immediate needs of the Organization with the imperatives of the current financial situation, and would give priority to the most critical issues.

55. While some progress had been made in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 63/250 in the areas of workforce planning, the staff selection system, learning and development policy and staff health and well-being, the Assembly's guidance was required on a number of outstanding issues. The European Union had stated its views on the harmonization of conditions of service at the preceding meeting. Harmonization was beneficial where possible, but every proposal must also be examined with respect to its budgetary implications. On the question of continuing contracts, the United Nations must have a career corps of staff of the highest integrity, efficiency and competence but should also be able to adjust its workforce according to its changing needs. The European Union would welcome the benefits expected from the full application of the Inspira system.

56. The Secretary-General's efforts to modernize the national competitive recruitment examination through the proposed young professionals programme were welcome. Undoubtedly a new and comprehensive system could soon be developed with guidance from the Assembly.

57. **Mr. Coffi** (Côte d'Ivoire), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Group had consistently supported human resources reform as a means of ensuring equitable geographical distribution and gender parity in the United Nations. The staff should reflect the Organization's diverse membership: every effort should be made to ensure that developing countries — from Africa in particular — were adequately represented among staff, especially in senior policymaking positions.

58. While shorter-term operational workforce planning could address needs that had already been identified for field operations, it should not replace or impede comprehensive long-term planning. Both short-term and long-term planning were essential for the United Nations and lessons learned in that respect should be taken into account.

59. The Secretary-General should continue to develop a close working relationship and regular consultations with major troop-contributing countries in order to fill vacancies in the field missions and ensure the proper representation of those countries in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support.

60. The Secretary-General's report on the system of geographical distribution (A/65/305/Add.2) did not adequately respond to the Assembly's request for a comprehensive review of the system. Such a review was a priority for the Group, which would work with other Member States to ensure that a fair system was put in place.

61. The proposed reduction in the period for advertising individual vacancies would put candidates from developing countries at a disadvantage owing to

their limited access to United Nations websites. There was room to streamline the selection process and thereby reduce the number of days required to fill vacancies without shortening the advertising period.

62. The freeze on the granting of continuing contracts owing to the absence of an agreement on the modalities for their implementation was unacceptable. If no agreement was reached at the current session, it might be preferable to revert to the old contractual arrangements.

63. There was merit in the Secretary-General's proposals on harmonizing conditions of service, which were based on ICSC recommendations. As a matter of principle, all staff serving in the common system should be given the same treatment. He wished to have an assurance from the Deputy Secretary-General that her acknowledgment of concerns that the new harmonization policy might have an impact on the delivery of operational activities by agencies, funds and programmes did not mean that implementation of the proposals would be postponed.

64. **Mr. Quinlan** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, said that harmonization of the conditions of service was one of the principal human resources management issues currently before the Committee. The three delegations would assess the proposals in the light of three objectives: to enhance programme delivery by enabling the United Nations to attract and retain staff; to ensure the equitable treatment of staff working in similar conditions; and to develop a common system approach applicable to all participating organizations and led by ICSC.

65. Duty stations should be designated as family or non-family based on the security situation and related objective factors. It was untenable for staff members at the same duty station to be treated differently, primarily owing to the source of funding of their programme. He would seek further clarification regarding the proposals for rest and recuperation travel and why it would be necessary to provide more than transportation costs.

66. The additional hardship allowance proposed to compensate staff working in peacekeeping operations for the costs of supporting dependants and to replace the special operations approach of the agencies, funds and programmes should be defined by ICSC. As recommended by the Advisory Committee, the transition period for any such measure should serve to address and mitigate unintended effects that might arise from its implementation.

67. The Secretary-General proposed to grant continuing contracts to virtually all staff, primarily to create a basis for the payment of termination indemnities. However, there was an absence of detail on long-term staff planning; Member States needed that information to inform their deliberations on the matter.

68. The three delegations would welcome the full implementation of Inspira, which would help improve the overall functioning of the human resources management system.

69. On staff selection, the requirement that heads of department must justify in writing the selection of an external candidate for approval by the Office of Human Resources Management appeared contrary to the principle of merit-based selection.

70. As the Committee discussed those and other issues, such as staff mobility, recruitment, training, performance management and better representation of women in the United Nations workforce, he would ask the Secretariat to work with Member States to find ways to offset any costs associated with administrative reform.

71. **Ms. Pakarati** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that, in his report on contractual arrangements and harmonization of conditions of service (A/65/305/Add.1), the Secretary-General requested the General Assembly to endorse the proposals of ICSC on harmonization of conditions of service. However, in her statement, the Deputy-Secretary-General had expressed concern about the possible impact those proposals could have on the critical operations of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. The Group would therefore welcome a clarification of the apparent contradiction between the Secretary-General's recommendation and the Deputy Secretary-General's statement.

72. **Mr. Gürber** (Switzerland), speaking also on behalf of Liechtenstein, said that harmonization of conditions of service and continuing contracts were two issues that were of particular importance at the current session. With regard to the former, the two delegations agreed with the Advisory Committee that, in line with other common system entities, the Secretariat should base its designation of duty stations

as family or non-family on the security situation on the ground, as well as on other pertinent objective factors. They also believed that the General Assembly should take action on the questions of compensation for second households and the framework for rest and recuperation travel. However, the proposals before the Committee were far-reaching, both in respect of their financial implications and their scope. It was therefore particularly important to have a clear understanding of the proposed measures and their consequences.

73. The two delegations believed that, in principle, continuing contracts were useful. However, they shared the Advisory Committee's disappointment and concerns regarding the Secretary-General's proposals. Arriving at a solution that served the interests of both the Organization and staff required further discussions on the criteria and process for awarding continuing contracts and the modalities for the termination of such contracts.

74. The two delegations agreed with the Advisory Committee that the Secretary-General's proposals concerning other important areas of human resources management did not adequately address the General Assembly's requests and concerns. Those areas included workforce planning, the recruitment of young professionals, talent management and geographical distribution. The Assembly should reflect further on the Organization's long-term strategic objectives before taking a decision on those proposals.

75. **Mr. Cumberbatch** (Cuba) said that any action on the modalities for implementation of continuing contracts must go hand in hand with greater efforts to resolve the long-standing problem of equitable geographical distribution of staff. The problem was particularly acute in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Actions taken to remedy the situation had been inadequate, despite the decisions taken by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. His delegation would seek further information on the issue in informal consultations.

76. Another important issue was the manner in which senior managers were selected. In that connection, some of the recommendations that had been made by the Joint Inspection Unit merited particular attention and his delegation looked forward to discussing those recommendations in informal consultations.

77. His delegation was concerned by the serious disagreements between the Secretariat and staff unions regarding human resources management, and by the differences between the Secretariat and the officials of certain funds and programmes with regard to the recommendations of ICSC on harmonization of conditions of service. Those differences demonstrated that there was a serious problem with internal governance and it did not seem that appropriate measures were being taken in order to resolve that problem.

78. Throughout 2010, particularly in discussions on system-wide coherence, Member States had been given assurances that internal discussions, whether within CEB or other entities, on harmonizing management practices, including those related to conditions of service, had been going well. Member States had also been assured that the Secretariat, funds, programmes and specialized agencies were complying with the relevant intergovernmental mandates. It was therefore puzzling that, as the General Assembly was about to take a decision on the issue, some funds and programmes were dissociating themselves from the outcome of extensive discussions within the common system and bringing up the issue anew in the General Assembly, despite the fact they had participated in the ICSC discussions and accepted the Commission's recommendations.

79. Strong differences on the question of the common system had emerged among Member States in informal consultations. Some Member States were already taking sides, although the proposals that had been presented were, in principle, a reflection of the consensus. Such a situation would make it even more difficult for the General Assembly to take a decision and could undermine the reform process, to which Member States, in response to the requests of the Secretariat, had devoted much time and effort.

80. **Mr. Castañeda Solares** (Guatemala) said it was understandable that, as with any change process, the reform of human resources management was meeting with resistance and concern. Member States would therefore have to defuse four sources of tension in order to continue moving forward with that vital reform.

81. The first source of tension was the traditional relationship between labour and management. Management had a responsibility to act sensibly and

prudently, while the staff would push for better working conditions and greater benefits. Such a dynamic was the norm in national civil services and there was no reason to expect that the situation should differ in the international civil service.

82. The second source of tensions was the divergent views of staff on the reform process. It should be recalled that the staff unions had not communicated a unified position on the issue to the Committee.

83. The third source of tension was the differences between the main contributors to the budget and the smaller contributors. Although all Member States sought to improve the functioning of the Organization, the cost of any reform proposal was of particular concern to the largest contributors. Budgetary concerns could potentially be the main obstacle to the reform of human resources management.

84. The last source of tension was the increased authority that Member States had delegated to the Secretary-General. It was only natural that, in return, States should demand greater accountability, including with regard to human resources management. There were three levels of accountability in that regard: the accountability of the staff to management; the accountability of management to the Member States; and the accountability of Governments to their constituents. Establishing systems of accountability at each of those levels was also a source of tensions between management and staff, as well as between management and the intergovernmental bodies.

85. The Secretariat's proposals were a road map for the reform of human resources management. Adopting those proposals required Member States to compromise in order to defuse tensions and remove obstacles on the road to reform.

86. **Mr. Shin** Boo-nam (Republic of Korea) said that an effective performance appraisal system was vital to enhancing the Organization's competitiveness. A thorough review of that system was therefore a prerequisite for all other reform measures and would enhance the credibility and effectiveness of the system. One possible means of enhancing the performance appraisal system was the introduction of compulsory distribution of performance ratings.

87. The successful implementation of the new contractual arrangements depended on an enhanced performance appraisal system. Neither the eligibility criteria for conversion to a continuing appointment nor the imposition of an arbitrary limit on the number of staff eligible for conversion were the real issues. The General Assembly must conclude its discussion of the modalities for the implementation of continuing appointments at the current session.

88. His delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that the Secretary-General's comprehensive assessment of the system of geographical distribution (A/65/305/Add.2) did not adequately respond to the General Assembly's requests. He therefore urged the Secretary-General to take further action on that important issue.

89. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a young professionals programme and the improved business process that was already under implementation for the national competitive recruitment examination. It supported the overall policy direction of the proposed programme, including the central placement of candidates, functional and geographical mobility, reduction of the length of the examination process and development of online and computer-based examinations.

90. Its support for the proposed programme notwithstanding, his delegation did not agree with the proposal to lower the age limit for candidates for the national competitive recruitment examination from 32 years to 26. As pointed out by the Advisory Committee, such a change could disadvantage candidates whose mother tongue was neither English nor French. Those candidates would require additional language education and perhaps even job experience in an English- or French-speaking environment. Shortening the examination process, together with improved roster management, should greatly reduce the entry age.

91. His delegation wished to discuss further the proposal to lower the initial placement level for those who succeeded in the exam from P-2 to P-1. In view of the skill level and experience of candidates, his delegation proposed that successful candidates could perhaps be initially appointed to posts as high as the P-4 level, depending on qualifications.

92. **Mr. Ntrakwa** (Ghana) said that human resources management should make the Organization more responsive and flexible and should support a culture of empowerment and performance that gave staff members equal access to career opportunities irrespective of the

programmes for which they worked or the funding sources of those programmes. He concurred with the Advisory Committee that long-term workforce planning for major occupational groups was an attainable goal. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's proposals on training, which was the best means of addressing gaps in skill sets linked to career planning and management, but would seek clarification on the apparent inadequacy in monitoring training activities financed from extrabudgetary sources.

93. Reducing the period for advertising job openings from 60 to 45 days would not in itself adequately address the challenges of filling vacancies. Any proposal to address the issue must take a comprehensive approach.

94. He welcomed the planned introduction of the human resources management scorecard as a mechanism for monitoring the performance of senior managers, particularly with respect to geographical and gender targets in staffing, and for enhancing accountability.

95. The proposals on the harmonization of conditions of service at non-family duty stations should be fully implemented, since the equal treatment of all staff serving under similar conditions would help achieve greater coherence and effectiveness in carrying out the complex activities of the United Nations system organizations.

96. It was a matter of concern that the General Assembly had so far been unable to reach agreement on implementing the continuing contract in the Secretariat. He hoped that the Secretary-General's revised proposals would lead to constructive deliberations on the issue.

97. With respect to the young professionals programme, his delegation would seek clarification of the rationale for and implications of reducing the age limit for candidates from 32 to 26 years.

98. Lastly, as a major troop-contributing country, Ghana expected that the Secretary-General's proposal to work closely with such countries to fill vacancies in field missions would also ensure that they were properly represented in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support.

99. **Mr. Adik** (India) said that his Government strongly supported reform initiatives that would give the United Nations a well-trained, motivated, committed and versatile workforce. Commendable work had been done to modernize human resources management in the United Nations system, but the reform process could be completed only through the collective efforts of management and staff in consultation with the Member States. Furthermore, the proposals currently before the Committee should be seen as a comprehensive reform package.

100. The high vacancy rates, particularly in field missions, and the lengthy recruitment process were matters of great concern. It was inconceivable that the vacancy rates resulted solely from a shortage of qualified applicants. The Organization should consider innovative solutions such as seeking nominations from Member States to staff departments and field missions with excessively high vacancy rates.

101. Workforce planning and talent management were also important. He hoped that the difficulties attending the launch of Inspira were simply teething problems and wished to have an update from the Secretariat on the system's functioning.

102. He expressed the hope that the questions of continuing contracts and the harmonization of conditions of service across the common system would be resolved at the current session: the Organization could not afford any further delay that might jeopardize the reform process.

103. The Secretariat should intensify its efforts to correct the imbalance in geographic distribution and gender representation. Moreover, there should be greater representation of troop-contributing countries, taking into account their experience in peacekeeping.

104. In any process of reform, resistance was natural and dialogue was essential. It was important to finish what had been started, and to provide the required resources, in order to secure a stronger and more efficient Secretariat.

105. **Ms. Morgan Sotomayor** (Mexico) said that the harmonization of conditions of service was one of the most important proposals currently before the Committee. The first step should be to make ICSC the sole mechanism for review of the conditions of service of all staff in the United Nations system, as opposed to bodies that did not report to the General Assembly.

Harmonization should be implemented by all agencies, funds, programmes and the Secretariat in parallel, and the resulting costs for the Secretariat should be absorbed within the existing regular and peacekeeping budgets.

106. The criteria for the granting of continuing contracts should include efficiency, the need for the post and the Organization's needs. To that end, it was necessary to define the core functions and continuing needs of the United Nations before undertaking further discussion of the contracts. The financial impact on Member States must also be taken into account.

107. Her delegation was prepared to discuss such measures as the proposed reduction of the advertising period for vacant posts to address high vacancy rates. However, the Secretariat must redouble its streamlining efforts, including through the use of Inspira, to reach the goal of filling posts within 120 days. Her delegation concurred with the Advisory Committee that internal candidates should not have priority over external candidates.

108. On possible changes to the number of posts subject to geographical distribution, her Government was of the view that staff should be recruited on the broadest possible geographical basis and that geographical distribution should be improved, primarily taking into account the contribution of each Member State to the Organization's regular budget.

109. No additional resources for training would be justified in the absence of a comprehensive training strategy and full information on training funded by extrabudgetary resources.

110. On the proposal to replace the national competitive examination with the young professionals programme, her delegation acknowledged the need to rejuvenate the Secretariat staff but felt that the age of 30, rather than 26, was a more appropriate minimum age for candidates, since individuals from certain countries might be at a disadvantage owing to the need to complete their military service, complete their studies or gain professional experience before sitting for the examination. Mexico proposed that the Secretary-General should have the authority to grant exemptions to the age limit for candidates from underrepresented or unrepresented countries.

111. With respect to the report on the activities of the Ethics Office (A/65/343), it was crucial that all cases of misconduct should be reported immediately and that mechanisms should be put in place to deal with them promptly. Her delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that the Office of Internal Oversight Services, not the Ethics Office, should have authority for investigating such cases.

112. **Ms. Tan** Guek Lan (Singapore) said that the Organization must strengthen its strategic workforce planning and monitoring and address its long-term human resources needs, including through policies on career development, training, roster management and mobility. The Secretariat's assessment that comprehensive workforce planning was of limited value was defeatist and outdated. It must be a priority to instil a modern, progressive mindset in the Secretariat.

113. As United Nations mandates expanded, it was increasingly critical to compete with other global institutions for the best and brightest talent. Swift recruitment was therefore essential, yet it had taken an average of 197 days to fill a post in 2009. The Organization must do much better if it wished to recruit well-qualified candidates. The Secretariat should avoid steps that shut off fair access to developing countries, such as reducing the advertising period for posts, and should instead conduct a comprehensive review of the recruitment process — including the shortlisting, interview and reference check processes — to improve the overall response time.

114. A rigorous performance appraisal system was the cornerstone of any human resources management framework. As international civil servants, staff must be held accountable for their performance every step of the way. Initiatives such as linking individual workplans with departmental strategic frameworks and implementing a multi-rater feedback mechanism were steps in the right direction. A more realistic and stringent performance appraisal system — one that did not routinely rate an inordinate number of staff as meeting or exceeding expectations — was needed. Apathetic and incompetent staff must be objectively identified to receive remedial action, while good performers should receive recognition and reward. A review of the performance appraisal system would admittedly be sensitive and challenging, but would benefit the Organization in the long term.

115. **Mr. Sene** (Senegal) welcomed the initiatives aimed at modernizing human resources management in the Secretariat. Their success would depend on a strategy for continuing training of staff throughout their careers. His delegation therefore requested the Secretary-General to take the measures necessary to implement section VIII, paragraph 4, of General Assembly resolution 63/250. Staff unions should be involved through representation on the advisory body on staff training. The training strategy should have adequate and predictable short-, medium- and long-term financing, and could include an experience-sharing platform focusing on managerial capacity-building among senior managers, particularly in the areas of finance, procurement, human resources management, security and communications.

116. The representation of developing countries in the Secretariat could be better addressed. Not all developing countries were considered unrepresented or underrepresented States, and therefore the principle of geographical distribution set out in General Assembly resolution 153 (II) did not apply. Instead, the General Assembly in its resolution 63/250 had requested the Secretary-General to present proposals to increase the representation of developing countries in the Secretariat. The low number of managers from developing countries in the Secretariat — only 17 per cent at the level of Director, Assistant Secretary-General or Under-Secretary-General, including a meagre 4.5 per cent from Africa — must be corrected, particularly since the activities of the main departments were often directed towards the countries of the South. The Secretary-General should also take bold steps to achieve gender parity and promote women to senior positions, with due regard for the Organization's standards of competence and integrity. Special attention should be paid to women from developing countries, particularly African States.

117. On the issue of harmonizing the designation of non-family duty stations based solely on a security assessment, as recommended by ICSC, his delegation did not understand why two major African capitals — Addis Ababa, the headquarters of the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa, and Nairobi, the headquarters of a United Nations Office, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements — were designated as non-family duty stations.

118. His delegation welcomed the measures taken to promote staff health in difficult duty stations; considering the recent natural disasters in some Member States, the Secretary-General should examine ways to enhance those measures.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.